



## South Dakota Department of the Military South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs



# PROGRAMS HONOR VETERANS

A big **SHOUT OUT** to all the communities, school, veterans service organizations, tribes, and counties that hosted Veterans Day programs this year. We are truly blessed to have this unending support.

Events included lunches, parades, programs, dinners, and award ceremonies. The communities of Yankton and Deadwood hosted the "Fallen Heroes" for their programs.

SDDVA Field Officer Steve Oliva was the keynote speaker in Gettysburg.

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Maj. Gen. Tim Reisch, SDNG adjutant general and Secretary of the South Dakota Department of the Military was the keynote speaker in De Smet. SDDVA Secretary Larry Zimmerman was the keynote speaker at Veterans Day programs in North Sioux City, Deadwood, Huron and Dell Rapids.



## SDDVA PARTICIPATES IN VSO CONGRESSIONAL FORUM

The South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs and numerous partners within the veteran network participated in the VA Black Hills Health Care Center's Congressional Forum last week.

SDDVA Field Officer Steve Oliva and MJF State Veterans Home Veterans Service Technician Ralph Sowder participated in the forum, along with County Veterans Service Officers Ken Irwin (Custer), Angela Sutton (Meade), Wendy Weakland (Fall River), Neal Lutke and Jammie Guffey (Pennington).

Others participating in the forum were VABHHCS staff, South Dakota congressional staff, and VSOs from Wyoming and Nebraska.

Staff from the VABHHCS provided detailed updates on the programs and services provided, as well as the challenges they are facing. Congressional delegation staffers updated participants on federal legislative actions. Oliva provided an update on the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs activities and programs.



## CHRISTMAS TREES TO SOON ADORN

Christmas trees will begin to fill South Dakota Capitol hallways later this month for the annual Christmas at the Capitol holiday display.

More than 90 Christmas trees will be decorated Nov. 23 – 24 by members of schools, churches, communities and civic groups from across the state.

The display will officially begin with a grand lighting ceremony on Tuesday evening, Nov. 26, and continue through Saturday, Dec. 28. Display hours for the public will be from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. CDT each day.

Thousands of guests visit the South Dakota State Capitol each year to view the decorated trees. This year's theme is "Christmas in the Great Outdoors."

The two-story South Dakota tree specially featured this year in the Capitol rotunda was donated by Brandon and Cassandra Deffenbaugh of Brandon. The tree, a 31-foot blue spruce, will be decorated by the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish & Parks.

In addition to the trees, many other areas of the Capitol will be decorated for the holiday season, including the grand marble staircase and the Capitol grounds.





## SD GUARDSMAN NAMED TOP INSTRUCTOR FOR NATIONAL AWARD

A South Dakota Army National Guard Soldier was named the National Defense Transportation Association's Instructor of the Year for 2013. Staff Sgt. David Hughes, of Harrisburg, is an instructor in the SDARNG's 2nd Battalion (Modular Training), 196th Regiment (Regional Training Institute) in Sioux Falls.

The NDTA Instructor of the Year award honors the best instructor in each of the service transportation schools. Hughes was selected due to his exceptional character and performance while upholding the highest traditions of logistics instruction as an instructor for the 88M Motor Transport Operator Course.

"His presence and instruction significantly contributed to 2nd Battalion receiving an exceptional rating during its recent U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command accreditation," said State Command Sgt. Maj. Susan Shoe, senior noncommissioned officer for the SDARNG. "Staff Sgt. Hughes is a one-on-one mentor who leads by example as an instructor, leader and role model. He truly exemplifies the Transportation Corps' motto 'Spearhead of Logistics' in all he does."

Hughes has been an instructor with 2nd Battalion since January 2011. He has maintained a 100 percent graduation rate, 98 percent first-time pass rate on written exams, and a 100 percent first-time pass rate on performance exams for all classes he instructed.

"Hughes is a technical and tactical expert who has the ability to communicate the 88M1O duties and responsibilities, as well as motivate his students to excel," said Shoe, who also serves as the state's senior logistics NCO. "He uses examples and tools from the operating environment to allow his students to develop as adaptive, thinking Soldiers, as well as make training more realistic and exciting."

The NDTA is a non-political, non-profit educational association of government, military and industry professionals dedicated to fostering a strong and efficient global logistics and transportation system in support of national security, according to the organization's fact sheet.

Some of the organizations key goals are to advance knowledge and science of logistics and transportation, facilitate knowledge sharing of logistics and transportation between government and industry and educate members on important issues affecting global logistics and transportation.



## SDSU VETERANS RESOURCE CENTER OPENS

South Dakota State University marked the opening of a new veterans center Tuesday as a resource to help students returning from military service to begin or resume their college education. About 500 of the university's 12,000 students are veterans.

SDDVA Secretary Larry Zimmerman and Field Officer George Arends were on hand for the ribbon-cutting ceremony, along with Brookings County Veterans Service Officer Mike Holzhauser.

The center will be a great place for student veterans to meet, study, use computers, receive assistance on benefits, as well as find personal and emotional support.

The resource center at SDSU is modeled after the one at South Dakota School of Mines and Technology in Rapid City.

Secretary Zimmerman, the event's keynote speaker mentioned, that the new veterans center is not only for the current 500 veterans on campus but for many generations of veterans to come.





## SIOUX FALLS GIRL SCOUTS SUPPORTING SOUTH DAKOTA'S SOLDIERS

During a typical Girl Scout meeting the girls will discover fun, friendship, and power; participate in field trips, sports skill-building clinics; and practice environmental stewardship.

This week while the Sioux Falls Girl Scouts were partaking in what many would define as a community service project, preparing care packages for soldiers that are deployed, they had a surprise visit from the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs. Secretary Larry Zimmerman and Field Officer George Arends thanked the girls for their support of our troops.

After the girls were finished assembling their packages, Zimmerman and Arends sat down in campfire style and visited with the girls about veterans, deployments, the use of military dogs and numerous other topics that the girls had questions about regarding our troops and their service to this great country.



## SANFORD DOCTOR, JOINS SD GUARD

For 30 years, Dr. Scott Ecklund has been practicing family medicine and providing quality healthcare to South Dakota families. Ecklund, 58, begins a new chapter in his medical profession as the most recent physician to join the South Dakota Army National Guard.

When not examining patients at Sanford Health in Sioux Falls, Ecklund will put his medical expertise to work providing medical care for soldiers. Wearing the rank of major, Ecklund will substitute his traditional white lab coat for an Army combat uniform and will serve with the 730th Area Support Medical Company of Vermillion.

"I think men and women in today's military have performed brilliantly – in everything that we have asked them to do – and sometimes we've asked so much and give them back so little," said Ecklund, a resident of Brandon. "That makes me really want to try to help out and is why I decided to join."

Ecklund also serves in the S.D. Legislature in the House of Representatives for District 25. In his first year of the Legislature, Ecklund met a fellow legislator who also serves in the National Guard. It's here where he first considered joining the Guard.

"When I was out at the Legislature in January, I met Jim Seward and we talked about the National Guard. We have a National Guard breakfast where they invite all the legislators to come and hear about what the Guard does," said Ecklund. "That's why I decided to do it. I was shocked that they would actually take an old guy like me, but they did."

Ecklund said he always wanted to serve in military. His father served during the Korean War in the Navy. "He was actually in the Seabees, and he was stationed in Cuba at Guantanamo Bay," said Ecklund of his father's service. "That's the only military connection that I really have. I always hear his stories about being in the military; he was a 20 year-old kid when he was in."

Now, Ecklund will be telling stories to his kids and grandkids; he has four children, four grandchildren and a fifth on the way – all with his wife of 30 years, Alison.

Now that Ecklund finally has his opportunity to serve his state and nation, he looks forward to the experiences he will have.

"I know that if there is a deployment opportunity, I would welcome the chance to go. Not that I want to go to war or anything, but I want to be there to help," said Ecklund. "I think that I have enough experience over the years with counseling and dealing with all kinds of issues being in family medicine. I think I can actually help some of these young people that are either wounded, have some stress problems or PTSD. I look forward to being able to help in that regard."

Either in his role as a doctor or as a legislator, helping and serving people is something Ecklund knows well and is something he looks forward to for as long as he is able.





# Upcoming Events

## 2013

Nov. 16—Shrine of Democracy Chorus and the Abbey Road Band—Rushmore Plaza Holiday Inn  
Nov. 18—South Dakota Veterans Council Meeting—DAV Headquarters in Sioux Falls—10:00 am  
Dec. 14—Wreaths Across America Ceremony Wildwood Mausoleum at the Hills of Rest Memorial Park—300 N. Chapel Hill Road—Sioux Falls—11:00  
Dec. 4—SD Veterans Commission Meeting  
Dec. 6—SD Veterans Council Legislative Roundtable—American Legion—Watertown  
Dec. 7—SD Veterans Council Legislative Roundtable—DAV Post—Sioux Falls  
Dec. 14—SD Veterans Council Legislative Roundtable—VFW—Rapid City  
Dec. 14—Wreaths Across America Ceremony—Black Hills National Cemetery—10:00 am

## 2014

Jan. 14—South Dakota Legislative Session Opens  
Jan. 24-26—American Legion Mid Winter Conference—Crossroads—Huron  
Jan. 25-26- 235<sup>th</sup> MP Reintegration 30 Day Yellow Ribbon Event—Chamberlain Cedar Shore Resort  
Jan. 31—SD Veterans Council Breakfast with Legislators—6:30 am  
Feb. 6—American Legion Legislative Reception—Post 8—Pierre  
Feb. 8- 129<sup>th</sup> MPAD Reintegration 30 Day Yellow Ribbon Event—Rapid City  
Feb 15-16- 152<sup>nd</sup> Reintegration 30 Day Yellow Ribbon Event—Sioux Falls  
Feb. 18-20—SDDVA New VSO Orientation—Sioux Falls  
Apr. 5-6—152nd Yellow Ribbon  
May 2-4—DAV Conference—Ramkota Hotel—Aberdeen  
Jun. 19-22—American Legion Conference—Ramkota Hotel—Pierre  
Aug. 25-27—SDDVA Veterans Benefits School—Ramkota Hotel—Pierre

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